



## Background Sheet 9: ANZUS TREATY

### *A People's Inquiry: Exploring the Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia*

*What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in U.S.-led wars and the U.S.-alliance?*

### The ANZUS Treaty and U.S.-Australia Alliance

The **Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS or ANZUS Treaty)** is the 1951 non-binding security agreement between the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The Treaty emerged after the Second World War when Australia turned from the British Empire to the U.S. for protection. The agreement does not commit to mutual defence in the manner of NATO, only that signatories “act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.”<sup>1</sup>

After the fall of Singapore and the bombing of Darwin in the Second World War Australia discovered that its reliance on the British Empire for its defence was misplaced and dangerous. Instead, the war and post-war government's sought protection from the new power in the Pacific, the U.S. For its part, Washington was largely ambivalent about signing a treaty and did not want a NATO-style agreement. Through diplomacy and Australia joining the Korean War, the U.S. eventually agreed to the ANZUS treaty.<sup>2 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix-B *The ANZUS Treaty, Australian Treaty Series 1952 No 2, DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, CANBERRA, Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America [ANZUS], (San Francisco, 1 September 1951), Entry into force generally: 29 April 1952*

<sup>2</sup> David McLean, "Anzus Origins: A Reassessment," *Australian Historical Studies* 24#94 (1990), pp. 64-82.

<sup>3</sup> "ANZUS treaty comes into force | NZHistory, New Zealand history

New Zealand withdrew from ANZUS in 1985, instigated by growing anti-nuclear sentiment. Labor Prime Minister David Lange banned nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships from New Zealand waters. In February 1985 the USS Buchanan, a ship capable of carrying nuclear arms, tried to dock in New Zealand and was refused. Lange's steadfastness earned him the ire of the U.S. and in retaliation Washington suspended its treaty obligations under ANZUS to New Zealand<sup>4</sup>.

### **ANZUS Treaty Today**

In practice, the Treaty has been used by Australia as a reason for joining the United States in their overseas wars of aggression in regions **not** in, or bordering, the Pacific including Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and in situations that **did not** involve a military threat to Australia.

The justification, unstated, was that in showing support for the United States in its wars, Australia was contributing to an insurance policy with the United States for continued protection of Australia from any military threat.

In practice, the ANZUS Treaty has evolved to become a de facto military alliance with the United States establishing a regular military

online". [nzhistory.govt.nz](http://nzhistory.govt.nz). Retrieved 24 September 2017.

<sup>4</sup> King M: 2003, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Auckland 1310, New Zealand. p426 and pp. 495-6

presence in Australia with U.S. Marine deployment to Darwin annually. These U.S. Marines train with the ADF and every two years carry out the Talisman Sabre war exercises with U.S. military forces, (air-force, naval forces and land forces) on and off the coast of Australia. This deployment of U.S. troops together with the U.S. stationing of military supplies and the military use of Australia's ports and aircraft runways is underpinned by the signing in 2014 of the Force Posture Agreement between the United States and Australia<sup>5</sup>.

One such aircraft runway at the Tindal RAAF base not far from Darwin is being upgraded at a cost to the Australian Taxpayer of \$1 billion-plus. This is to facilitate landing and take-off of U.S. B1 bombers which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons and of reaching southern China.

The United States has also established major military communications facilities in Australia justified by successive Australian governments as extensions of the ANZUS Treaty. These include the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap in Central Australia which communicates with U.S. Surveillance satellites and spies on countries and peoples in our region, providing battlefield intelligence to the U.S. and targeting information for its drone assassination attacks on individuals in countries with which Australia is not at war.

The North West Communications Base at Exmouth in WA provides the U.S. military with communication facilities to its fleet of nuclear-armed submarines enabling it to issue the trigger signal to those submarines for the launching of nuclear missiles.

The influence of the U.S.-Australia Alliance is felt most strongly in foreign policy through the AUSMIN talks at the Ministerial level held each year. The communique which is issued at the end of those talks sets the basic foreign policy agenda for Australia and it basically mirrors United States foreign policy at least on major issues.

IPAN Contact Details: PO Box 573 Coorparoo Qld 4151  
[ipan.australia@gmail.com](mailto:ipan.australia@gmail.com) [www.ipan.org.au](http://www.ipan.org.au)

**Bevan Ramsden** is a former Telecom engineer and TAFE teacher, long time peace activist and advocate for Australia's Independence. Bevan was a long-term member of the national Co-ordinating Committee of IPAN for a number of years until recently and is currently editor of IPAN's monthly publication, Voice.

<sup>5</sup> DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE CANBERRA  
*The Force Posture Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America (Sydney, 12 August 2014)*